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## The Adventures of the Woman Homesteader: the Life and Letters of Elinore Pruitt Stewart/Homesteading Women: An Oral History of Colorado, 1890-1950

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*The Adventures of the Woman Homesteader: The Life and Letters of Elinore Pruitt Stewart*, by Susanne K. George. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992. xiv, 218 pp. Photographs, bibliography, index. \$25.00 cloth.

*Homesteading Women: An Oral History of Colorado, 1890-1950*, by Julie Jones-Eddy. Twayne's Oral History Series. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992. xiv, 252 pp. Illustrations, map, biographies, index. \$26.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY BARBARA HANDY-MARCHELLO, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA

Two new books have been added to the growing body of historical literature on women in the settlement of the American West. Susanne K. George has edited a fascinating collection of the letters of Elinore Pruitt Stewart, the author of *Letters of a Woman Homesteader* and *Letters on an Elk Hunt by a Woman Homesteader*. George interlaces the letters with information about Stewart's life and her literary consciousness. Although the information is scanty, George introduces us to the historical Stewart, who worked hard alongside her husband, arranged to educate her children, participated in community affairs, and above all, was determined to write. George's interest lies in trying to determine whether Stewart's letters about "adventures" were based on factual events. George concludes that the two books of letters, as well as the private ones collected in this volume, were written "for publication embroidering facts with fiction" (199). By the end of the book, the reader is so charmed by Stewart the question seems an empty one.

Julie Jones-Eddy interviewed twenty-five women about their own or their mothers' homesteading experiences in northwestern Colorado. Their lives often parallel those of Stewart and her characters, sharing poverty, hard work, a sense of community that defied distances, and a fondness for the land. While Jones-Eddy presents the interviews with little comment, Elizabeth Jameson's afterword provides historical context for the interviews, interpreting them in light of the scarcity of primary materials about rural women. Jameson reminds us that the "particular gift" of *Homesteading Women* is the insight the oral histories offer into the flexibility of family "roles and strategies" that allowed these women and their families to succeed in their venture (228).

These two books are interesting because they let women tell their own stories. They tell of lives that were similar to those of rural women everywhere, but indelibly touched by the arid West.

The land is not just a backdrop to their experience, but becomes a part of them. Ethelyn Whalin Crawford said of herself "what I am . . . came out of this country" (Jones-Eddy, 213). Stewart rarely wrote a letter that did not include descriptions of the landscape or weather, sometimes going into great detail so that her correspondents could "see" western Wyoming as she did.

The facts of these women's lives were ordinary. They tended barn, field, and household chores, bore and raised children, and organized social and community events. Beyond these daily activities, however, Stewart and the Colorado women exhibit an extraordinary spirit that defied the hardness of the land and their material poverty. The editors allow "facts" to dominate the books, but a close reading reveals that events serve as only a backdrop for more revealing truths about their lives and their perceptions of their world. This distinction is apparent in Stewart's statement about a daily task. "My garden has always been a thing of . . . deepest enjoyment, . . . quiet time to mentally digest bits I had read, knowing all the while that the generous earth would supply in plenty my own table and have some left . . . for those less fortunate" (189). Facts should never be mistaken for truth.

*The German-American Radical Press: The Shaping of a Left Political Culture, 1850-1940*, edited by Elliott Shore, Ken Fones-Wolf, and James P. Danky. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992. viii, 247 pp. Notes, tables, bibliography, index. \$36.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY JAMES M. BERGQUIST, VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY

For most of the nineteenth century, German-Americans were the largest non-English-speaking immigrant group in the United States. Their size allowed for great internal diversity, whether of religion, class, occupation, or ideology. Within the "German-American community" lay many subcommunities. The large number of Germans also encouraged a prolific newspaper press, as diversified as the population it served, and frequently aimed at specific interests and cultures within these myriad subcommunities. One of the most dynamic elements within the German press was its radical journalism, which arose particularly among the refugees of the revolutions of 1848, and developed to its strongest in the labor-oriented radical newspapers at the turn of the century.

*The German-American Radical Press* presents a potpourri of essays relating to that journalistic tradition. About half of the papers were originally presented at a conference on the German-

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